

Amendments to the Claims:

The following claims will replace all prior versions of the claims in this application (in the unlikely event that no claims follow herein, the previously pending claims will remain):

1. (Currently amended) A process for the separation of alkyl branched C₁₂ to C₂₄ fatty acids from a fatty acid mixture comprising 15 to 65 % by weight of linear C₁₂ to C₂₄ fatty acids and 35 to 85 % by weight of alkyl branched C₁₂ to C₂₄ fatty acids, relative to the total weight of the fatty acid mixture, wherein the process comprises: comprises;
 - (i) optionally hydrogenating the fatty acid mixture,
 - (ii) cooling the mixture to form crystals, and
 - (iii) separating the alkyl branched C₁₂ to C₂₄ fatty acids from the mixture by dry fractionation.
2. (Original) A process according to claim 1 wherein the fatty acid mixture comprises greater than 95% by weight of saturated fatty acids, and less than 5% by weight of unsaturated fatty acids.
3. (Previously presented) A process according to claim 1 wherein the fatty acid mixture comprises 40 to 65% by weight of alkyl branched C₁₂ to C₂₄ fatty acids, and in the range from 35 to 60% by weight of linear C₁₂ to C₂₄ fatty acids.
4. (Currently amended) A process according to claim 1 wherein the fatty acid mixture comprises
 - (i) less than 4% by weight of C₁₄ fatty acids, and/or
 - (ii) in the range from 10 to 35% by weight C₁₆ fatty acids, and/or
 - (iii) in the range from 50 to 75% by weight of C₁₈ fatty acids, and/or
 - (iv) in the range from 3 to 15% by weight C₂₀ fatty acids, ~~and or~~ and/or
 - (v) in the range from 2 to 10% by weight of C₂₂ fatty acids.
5. (Currently amended) A process according to claim 1 wherein the fatty acid mixture comprises in the range from 15 to 30%, ~~preferably 20 to 25%~~ by weight C₁₆ fatty acids.

6. (Currently amended) A process according to claim 1 wherein the fatty acid mixture comprises in the range from 55 to 65%, ~~preferably 57 to 63%~~ by weight of C₁₈ fatty acids.

7. (Currently amended) A process according to claim 1 wherein the weight ratio of C₁₈ to C₁₆ saturated linear fatty acids present in the fatty acid mixture is in the range from 0.4 to 1.5:1, ~~preferably 0.5 to 1.2:1~~.

8. (Currently amended) A process according to claim 1 wherein the separated alkyl branched C₁₂ to C₂₄ fatty acids comprise in the range from 73 to 95% by weight of branched fatty acids, and in the range from 5 to 27% by weight of linear fatty acids.

9. (Currently amended) A process according to claim 1 wherein the separated alkyl branched C₁₂ to C₂₄ fatty acids comprise

- (i) less than 3% by weight of branched C₁₄ fatty acids, and/or
- (ii) in the range from 2 to 12% by weight of branched C₁₆ fatty acids, and/or
- (iii) in the range from 55 to 85% by weight of branched C₁₈ fatty acids, and/or
- (iv) in the range from 2 to 12% by weight of branched C₂₀ acids, and/or
- (v) in the range from 1 to 8% by weight of branched C₂₂ fatty acids.

10. (Currently amended) A process according to claim 1 wherein the separated alkyl branched C₁₂ to C₂₄ fatty acids comprise in the range from 4 to 10%, ~~preferably 6 to 8%~~ by weight of branched C₁₆ fatty acids.

11. (Currently amended) A process according to claim 1 wherein the separated alkyl branched C₁₂ to C₂₄ fatty acids comprise in the range from 60 to 80%, ~~preferably 65 to 75%~~ by weight of branched C₁₈ fatty acids.

12. (Currently amended) A process according to claim 1 wherein the separated alkyl branched C₁₂ to C₂₄ fatty acids comprise

- (i) in the range from 3 to 14% by weight of linear C₁₆ fatty acids, and/or
- (ii) in the range from 0.5 to 6% by weight of linear C₁₈ fatty acids.

13. (Currently amended) A process according to claim 1 wherein the separated alkyl branched C₁₂ to C₂₄ fatty acids comprise C₁₈ to C₁₆ saturated linear fatty acids present at a weight ratio in the range from 0.1 to 0.7:1.

14. (Currently amended) A process according to claim 1 wherein the separated alkyl branched C₁₂-C₂₄ fatty acids comprise greater than 90% by weight of saturated fatty acids, and in the range from 0 to 10% by weight of unsaturated fatty acids.

15. (Currently amended) A process according to claim 1 wherein the separated alkyl branched C₁₂-C₂₄ fatty acids have

- (i) an acid value in the range from 175 to 205 mgKOH.g⁻¹, and/or
- (ii) a saponification value in the range from 175 to 210 mgKOH.g⁻¹, and/or
- (iii) an unsaponifiable value of less than 7 g.100 g⁻¹, and/or
- (iv) an iodine value of less than 6 g.100 g⁻¹, and/or
- (v) a cloud point in the range from 0 to 10°C, and/or
- (vi) a colour value of less than 150 Hazen units.

16. (Currently amended) A process according to claim 1 wherein the separated alkyl branched C₁₂ to C₂₄ fatty acids have a cloud point in the range from 0 to 8°C, preferably 0 to 6°C.

17. (Previously presented) A process according to claim 1 wherein plate-like crystals are formed during cooling.

18. (Original) A process according to claim 17 wherein the plate-like crystals have a mean aspect ratio in the range from 1 to 2:1.

19. (Previously presented) A process according to claim 17 wherein the plate-like crystals have a mean crystal diameter in the range from 250 to 500 µm.

20. (Previously presented) A process according to claim 1 wherein the fatty acid mixture is initially heated to a temperature in the range from 48 to 80°C.

21. (Previously presented) A process according to claim 1 wherein the fatty acid mixture is cooled to a temperature in the range from 7 to 16°C.

22. (Previously presented) A process according to claim 1 wherein the alkyl branched C₁₂ to C₂₄ fatty acids are separated by filtration.

23. (Previously presented) A process according to claim 1 wherein the weight ratio of C₁₈ to C₁₆ saturated linear fatty acids present in the fatty acid mixture is adjusted prior to or during the cooling stage, preferably by the addition of palmitic acid.

24. (Original) A process according to claim 23 wherein in the range from 0.5 to 15 g of palmitic acid is added per 100 g of fatty acid mixture.

25-27. (Cancelled)